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Agencies partner in Lead Testing for Middle Georgia Children

Higher than normal readings in Macon County raise concerns

ATLANTA, Ga., (March 12, 2012) – Seven Head Start Agencies in Middle Georgia are testing children there for lead poisoning after higher than average readings raised concerns. Head Start joins the Georgia Department of Public Health and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the Quality Assurance Project Plan.

The project will conduct blood let tests on children under the age of six lacking a blood test for lead in 13 counties. Participating Head Start agencies include Macon-Bibb County EOC, Inc. Head Start, Putnam Board of Education Head Start, Baldwin County Board of Education Head Start, Washington County NB & PW Club, Inc., Jasper County Board of Education Head Start, Hancock County Board of Education Head Start, and Middle Georgia CAA Head Start. Head Start requires that all children enrolled be screened for lead and that appropriate follow up occurs.

Participating Head Start agencies will open the screening to the appropriate population in their service area. The area health departments will assist in drawing the blood through the finger stick method necessary to detect harmful levels of lead.

Page 2 – Agencies Partner in Lead Testing for Middle Georgia Children

“Lead poisoning can be an issue in areas with older homes built prior to 1978,” said Janice Haker, director for the Georgia Head Start Collaboration at Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. “The prevalence of lead in the Macon District is .8% compared with .6% in the state -- 33% higher than the rest of the state. In addition, some food items, spices, and candy imported into the United States have been determined to contain lead.”

About Bright from the Start

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia’s children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia’s Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.dec.state.ga.us.

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In photo, members of the Head Start staff are trained on the LeadCare II Analyzer by Dr. Anil T. Mangla, director of academic relations and research for the Georgia Department of Public Health. Twelve Staff from Head Start and the EPA were certified during this training.